A Lover's Diary

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I LIFT MY HEAD TOWARDS ALL THAT MAKES LIFE WISE AND SEE NO FARTHER THAN MY LADY'S EYE

A Lover's Diary

Songs in Sequence

By Gilbert Parker

CAMBRIDGE AND CHICAGO
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For · His · memory · and
in · Her · praise

A Lover's Diary

THE KING — *Whence art thou, sir?*

Gilfaron — My Lord, I know not well.
Indeed, I am a townsman of the world.
For once my mother told me that she saw
The Angel of the Cross Roads lead me out,
And point to every corner of the sky,
And say, "Thy feet shall follow in the trail
Of every tribe; and thou shalt pitch thy tent
Wherever thou shalt see a human face
That hath thereon the alphabet of life;
Yea, thou shalt spell it out e'en as a child:
And therein lieth wisdom."

The King — Art thou wise?

Gilfaron — Only according to the Signs.

The King—What signs?

Gilfaron — The first — the language of the Garden, sire,
When man spoke with the naked searching thought,
Unlacquered of the world.

The King — Speak so forthwith; come, show us to be wise.

Gilfaron — The Angel of the Cross Roads to me said:
"And wisdom comes by looking eye to eye,
Each seeing his own soul as in a glass;
For ye shall find the Lodges of the Wise,
The farthest Camp of the Delightful Fires,
By marching two by two, not one by one."

The Earl's Daughter.

As one would stand who saw a sudden light
Flood down the world, and so encompass him,
And in that world illumined Seraphim
Brooded above and gladdened to his sight;
So stand I in the flame of one great thought,
That broadens to my soul from where she waits,
Who, yesterday, drew wide the inner gates
Of all my being to the hopes I sought.
Her words come to me like a summer-song,
Blown from the throat of some sweet nightingale;
I stand within her light the whole day long,
And think upon her till the white stars fail:
I lift my head towards all that makes life wise,
And see no farther than my lady's eyes.

Silence sits often on me as I touch
Her presence; I am like a bird that hears
A note diviner than it knows, and fears
To share the larger harmony too much.
My soul leaps up, as to a sudden sound
A long-lost traveller, when, by her grace,
I learn of her life's sweetness face to face,
And sweep the chords of sympathies profound.
Her regal nature calmly holds its height
Above life's din, while moving in its maze.
Unworthy thoughts would die within her sight,
And mean deeds creep to darkness from her gaze.
Yet only in my dreams can I set down
The word that gives her nobleness a crown.

Courage have I to face all bitter things,
That start out darkly from the rugged path,
Leading to life's achievement; not God's wrath
Would sit so heavy when my lady sings.
I did not know what life meant till I felt
Her hand clasp mine in compact to the end;
Till her dear voice said, "See, I am your friend!"
And at her feet, amazed, my spirit knelt.
And yet I spoke but hoarsely then my thought,
I groped amid a thousand forces there;
Her understanding all my meaning caught,
It was illumined in her atmosphere.
She read it line by line, and then there fell
The curtain on the shrine—and it is well.

Just now a wave of perfume floated up
To greet my senses, as I broke the seal
Of her short letter; and I still can feel
It stir me as a saint the holy cup.
The missive lies there,—but a few plain words:
A thought about a song, a note of praise,
And social duties such as fill the days
Of women; then a thing that undergirds
The phrases like a psalm: a line that reads—
"I wish that you were coming!" Why, it lies
Upon my heart like blossoms on the skies,
Like breath of balm upon the clover meads.
The perfumed words soothe me into a dream;
My thoughts float to her on the scented stream.

If she should speak to me from some far place,
Between us rolling thousand leagues of sea,
I know that I should hear her, and should be
Beside her, though she could not see my face.
If she should start with some devouring pain,
My life would feel the pang, as now it knows
The shadow that some hidden sadness throws
Into her eyes sometimes; my grief in rain
Would fall, if her heart wept, and yet few tears
Have fallen from my eyes since in the dust
I laid my cavalier; and read the years
All backward, and life lost its largest trust.
He was so brave, so wayward; she is strong
In virtues, she the lady of my song.

I LOVED my Art. I loved it when the tide
Was sweeping back my hopes upon the sand;
When I had missed the hollow of God's hand
Held over me, and there was none to guide.
I set my face towards it, raising high
My arm in token that I would be true
To all great motives, though I sorely knew
That there was one star wanting in my sky.
Touching the chords of many harmonies,
I needed one to make them all complete.
I heard it sound like thunder-gathered seas,
What time my soul knelt at my lady's feet.
And there transfigured in her light I grew
In stature to the work that poets do.

None ever climbed to mountain heights of song,
But felt the touch of some good woman's palm;
None ever reached God's altitude of calm,
But heard one voice cry, "Follow!" from the throng.
I would not place her as an image high
Above my reach, cold, in some dim recess,
Where never she should feel a warm caress
Of this my hand that serves her till I die.
I would not set her higher than my heart,—
Though she is nobler than I e'er can be,—
Because she placed me from the crowd apart,
And with her tenderness she honoured me.
Because of this, I hold me worthier
To be her kinsman, while I worship her.

O MARVEL of our nature, that one life
Strikes through the thousand lives that fold it round,
To find another, even as a sound
Sweeps to a song through elemental strife!
Through cycles infinite the forces wait,
That destiny has set for union here;
No circumstance can warp them from their sphere;
They meet sometime; and this is God and Fate.
And God is Law, and Fate is Law in use,
And we are acted on by some deep cause,
That sanctifies "I will" and "I refuse,"
When Love speaks — Love, the peaceful end of Laws.
And I, from many conflicts over-past,
Find here Love, Law, and God, at last.

To-night I raised her hand unto my lips —
Her hand! Kings on their thrones might envy me,
Pilgrims close to their Mecca could not be
So glad as I — no Sea-god in his ships.
No sinner ever knelt the Cross to kiss,
Nor surpliced saint the ever-blessed Host,
More reverently than I her fingers, lost
For one great moment in my new-found bliss.
My lips are purer for that pressure, I
Shall feel henceforth that there is set a ban
On thoughts that dare not freely meet her eye,
On any word that honours not a man.
Upon my better life the seal she set,
And Time is ended ere I shall forget.

HIGH as the eagle builds his lonely nest
Above the sea, above the paths of man,
And makes the elements his barbican,
That none may break the mother-eagle's rest;
So build I far above all human eyes
My nest of love; Heaven's face alone bends down
To give it sunlight, starlight; while is blown
A wind upon it out of Paradise.
None shall affright, no harm may come to her,
Whom I have set there in that lofty home:
Love's eye is sleepless; I could feel the stir
E'en of God's cohorts, if they chanced to come.
I am her shield; I would that I might prove
How dear I hold the lady of my love.

THIS rose she gave me, this bright-petaled flower:
I scarce can see it, for my eyes are dim;
All my love fills them; the horizon's rim
Ne'er flushed to sunrise with a warmer dower.
The rose will fade; the leaves will droop and pine,
This first gift of her noble tenderness:
Had I the art of Malchus, it should bless
My sight thus till my sun should cease to shine.
Go to thy place, sweet flower, within these leaves—
Leaves that no other eyes have ever seen;
Lie there till I have gathered up the sheaves
Of my life's harvest, and stand still between
The two Eternities. When death gives rest,
I pray that they may lay thee on my breast.

WHEN thou makest a voyage to the stars, go thou blindfolded; and carry not a sword, but the sandals of thy youth.

Egyptian proverb.

Behold, now, I have touched the highest point
In my existence. When I turn my eyes
Backward to scan my outlived agonies,
I feel God's finger touch me, to anoint
With this sweet Present the ungenerous Past;
With love the wounds that struck stark in my soul;
With hope life's aching restlessness and dole;
To show me place to anchor in at last.
Like to a mother bending o'er the bed
Where sleeps, death-silent, one that left her side
Ere he had reached the flow of manhood's tide,
So stood I by my life whence Life had fled.
But Life came back at Love's clear trumpet-call,
And at Love's feet I cast the useless pall.

The face I turned towards the infinite,
In those dark days, was heavy with a woe
Such as come ever to the souls that know
The way they walk may nevermore be light.
I had grown weary with the strife of creeds,
Sick with young longings for a clearer day,
Patient always; and, standing by the way,
I struggled still to meet my comrades' needs.
But, God! ah, God, how wild the tempest blew! —
The hands I stretched to aid, they were not strong —
All impotence and weakness through and through,
And dawn was in its coming bleak and long.
"Lo, I am blind," I cried, "who lead the blind!"
And then my life grew homeless as the wind.

Year grew on year, thought followed upon thought,
Hearts grew estranged, then came divided ways;
And yet my peace was dearer than men's praise:
I did not falter while the truth I sought.
But O dear souls, who dried some sudden tears,
When there I said among you, I can teach
No further than I feel; no doctrine preach
That has not led me upward through the years—
'Twas you who praised me sometimes as I trod
The heavy path: you said, "Lo, there he stands
In that straight stair that cleaves the clouds to God."—
How could you tell my anchor dragged the sands!
I dare not blame you, and I still may lead
Your thoughts to me by Love's benignant creed.

It is enough that in this burdened time
The soul sees all its purposes aright.
The rest—what does it matter? Soon the night
Will come to whelm us, then the morning chime.
What does it matter, if but in the way
One hand clasps ours, one heart believes us true;
One understands the work we try to do,
And strives through Love to teach us what to say?
Between me and the chilly outer air
Which blows in from the world, there standeth one
Who draws Love's curtains closely everywhere,
As God folds down the banners of the sun.
Warm is my place about me, and above
Where was the raven, I behold the dove.

I FELT her fan my shoulder touch to-night.
Soft act, faint touch, no meaning did it bear
To any save myself, who felt the air
Of a new feeling cross my soul's clear sight.
To me what matter that the players played!
They grew upon the instant like the toys
Which dance before the sight of idle boys;
I could not hear the laughter that they made.
Swept was I on that breath her hand had drawn,
Through the dull air, into a mountain-space,
Where shafts of the bright sun-god interlace,
Making the promise of a golden dawn.
And straightway crying, "O my heart, rejoice!"
It found its music in my lady's voice.

FAR up the sky the sunset glamour spreads,
Far off the city lies in golden mist;
The sea grows calm, the waves the sun has kissed
Strike white hands softly 'gainst the rocky heads.
So calm the world, so still the city lies,
So warm the haze that spreads o'er everything;
And yet where, there, Peace sits as Lord and King,
Havoc will reign when next the sun shall rise.
The wheels pause only for a little space,
And in the pause they gather strength again.
'Tis but the veil drawn over Labour's face,
O'er strife, derision, and the sin of men.
My heart with a sweet inner joy o'erflows
To nature's peace, and a kind silence knows.

But see: my lady comes. I hear her feet
Upon the sward; she standeth by my side.
Just such a face Raphael had deified,
If in his day they two had chanced to meet.
And I, tossed by the tide of circumstance,
Lifting weak hands against a host of swords,
Paused suddenly to hear her gentle words
Make powerless the lightnings of mischance.
I, who was but a maker of poor songs,
That one might sing behind his prison bars,
I, who it seemed fate singled out for wrongs —
She smiled on me as smile the nearest stars.
From her deep soul I draw my peace, and thus,
One wreath of rhyme I weave for both of us.

Were I but as the master souls who move
In their high place, immortal on the earth,
My song might be a thing to crown her worth,—
'Tis but a pathway for the feet of Love.
But since she walks where I am fain to sing,
Since she has said, "I listen, O my friend!"
There is a glory lent the song I send,
And I am proud, yes, prouder than a king.
I grow to nobler use beneath her eyes—
Eyes that smile on me so serenely, will
They smile a welcome, though my best hope dies,
And greet me at the summit of the hill?
Will she, for whom my heart has built a shrine,
Take from me all that makes this world divine?

And yet, if that should come, if I should lay
Silently, some day, on Love's face the shroud;
If I should hear an angel's voice, not loud,
But full of heavenly sadness, to me say:
"She gave thee what she could awhile, until
Her heart sought higher place, her life o'erflowed
With thoughts that touched thee not; to her abode
Go nevermore — thy cup leave Time to fill."
If that should come, and on the coffin-lid
My last song-wreath I laid for evermore—
If that should come to me . . . No, God forbid!
I cannot speak the word; my heart is sore
To madness with the thought—O love, O queen,
I shall not doubt thee till Death stand between.

He that giveth well giveth always,
else the heart hath no strength.

Egyptian proverb.

I LIFT again the harp that I would hold
But feebly if thy face I did not see;
My fingers wander through a melody
That long I searched for in the days of old.
It is not I that sing; I only touch
The notes as thou dost teach them to me, dear;
I only give to thee a listening ear,
And better know, for loving thee so much.
My soul I cannot read save in thine eyes;
They mirror that which I had never found,
Or strangely seen, as figures in the skies,
Or heard but in the shadow of a sound.
If any praise come, then, unto thy bard,
Behold, it is not mine, but thy reward.

But if praise come not, if I make my art
My life, my end, and hold thy hand meanwhile,
O'er many a stumbling path, through dim defile
Achievement-wards; couldst thou, O noble heart,
Couldst thou cry: "Though the world pass on its way,
Unheeding all that thou in love hast wrought;
Though none should stoop to gather up thy thought,
As bread to help from fainting for a day;
Yet will I crown thee; and for high renown
Give thee my faith." If this thing thou couldst do,
I could all petty triumphs here disown,
And only grieve they were not won for you.
Content am I, if thou upon my head
Place one wreath, living, dear, or even dead.

Art's use: what is it but to touch the springs
Of nature? But to hold a torch up for
Humanity in Life's large corridor,
To guide the feet of peasants and of kings!
What is it but to carry union through
Thoughts alien to thoughts kindred, and to merge
The lines of colour that should not diverge,
And give the sun a window to shine through!
What is it but to make the world have heed
For what its dull eyes else would hardly scan!
To draw in a stark light a shameless deed,
And show the fashion of a kingly man!
To cherish honour, and to smite all shame,
To lend hearts voices, and give thoughts a name!

But wherein shall Art work? Shall beauty lead
It captive, and set kisses on its mouth?
Shall it be strained unto the breast of youth,
And in a garden live where grows no weed?
Shall it, in dalliance with the flaunting world,
Play but soft airs, sing but sweet-tempered songs?
Veer lightly from the stress of all great wrongs,
And lisp of peace 'mid battle-flags unfurled?
Shall it but pluck the sleeve of wantonness,
And gently chide the folly of our time?
But wave its golden wand at sin's duress,
And say, "Ah me! ah me!" to fallow crime?
Nay, Art serves Truth, and Truth, with Titan blows,
Strikes fearless at all evil that it knows.

In thee is all my art; from thee I draw
The substance of my dreams, the waking plan
Of practised thought; I can no measure scan,
But thou work'st in me like eternal law.
If I were rich in goodly title deeds
Of broad estate, won from posterity;
If from decaying Time I snatched a see
Richer than prelates pray for with their beads;
If some should bring before me frankincense,
And make a pleasant fire to greet mine eyes;
If there were given me for recompense
Gifts fairer than a seraph could devise:
I would, my sovereign, kneel to thee and say,
"It all is thine; thou showedst me the way."

And yet I marvel sometimes that I dare
Not look within thine eyes when they seek mine.
Is it because I feel thy spirit shine
So purely in them, that mine says, "Beware!
How canst thou meet the wonder of that soul,
Thou of such common make, of such poor worth!
Because she wanders here upon the earth,
Think'st thou to raise thine eyes as to control!"
How shall I answer why it should be thus?
How can one standing very near the sun
Reckon its rays, or show the overplus
Of light that makes all other lights as one?
Silent and sightless, thus sometimes by thee
I stand, and feel thy spirit compass me.

Sometimes, also, I know I dare not look,
Lest towards thee I stretch out forgetful hands;
Making all see what but one understands,
Turning forbidden pages of thy book.
My empty arms lie closely by my side,
My words come slowly, blindly, in such time;
I am as one who, in a foreign clime,
Speaks his desires in language all untried.
I am as he who puts his armour on,
To go straightway against a citadel,
But some one tells him therein bideth one,
Whom in his knightly heart he loveth well.
Because my lady says, "Nay, not so near."
I hold her mandate as I hold her, dear.

But is it so that I must never kiss
Thee on the brow, or smooth thy silken hair?
Never close down thine eyelids with Love's prayer,
Or fold my arms about my new-found bliss?
Must I unto the courses of my age
Worship afar, lest haply I profane
The temple that is now my holy fane,
For which my song is given as a gage?
Shall I who cry to all, "Come not within
The bounds where I my lady have enshrined;
I am her cavalier"; — shall I not win
One dear caress, the rich exchequer find
Of thy soft cheek? If thou command, my lips
Shall find surcease but at thy finger-tips.

Why do I love thee? Shall my answer run:
Because that thou hast beauty, noble place,
Because of some sweet glamour in thy face,
And eyes that shame the clear light of the sun?
Shall I exclaim upon thy snow-white hands,
Challenge the world to show a gentler mien,
Call down the seraphs to attest, the sheen
Upon thy brow is borrowed from their lands?
Shall I trace out a map of all thy worth,
Parcel thy virtues, say, "For this and this
I learned to love her; here new charms had birth;
I in this territory caught a bliss"?
Shall I make inventory of thy grace,
And crowd the total into common space?

NAY, lady, though I love thee, I make pause
Before thy question, and know naught to say;
Art cannot teach me to define the way,
Love led me, nor e'en register Love's cause.
It can but blazon in this verse of mine
What love does for me; what from Love it gains;
What is its quickening; but it refrains
From divination where thy merits shine.
Canst thou, indeed, not tell what wrought in thee
To bring me as a captive to thy feet?
Canst thou not say, "'Twas this that made decree
Of conquest; here thy soul with mine did meet"?
Or is it that both stand amazed before
The shrine where thou hast blessed and I adore?

Teach me, O Sister Art, how to express
The so much excellence that conquers me;
Into my pen put such nobility
Of language as sorts to her perfectness.
Let me not, kneeling at my altar rail,
Have poor thanksgiving for the cup I hold;
Show me to broider with the purest gold
Love's full commandment, that no sentence fail.
Sister, O Sister Art, upon whose breast
I have closed heavy eyes, and found thy kiss
Make rich amendment for life's rank unrest,
Be with me now to strengthen me in this.
Make me with eloquence to character
My lady's high deserts, thou one with her.

O MYSTIC wings, upbear me lightly now,
Beyond life's faithful labour to a seat
Where I can feel the end of things complete,
Where no hot breath of ill can scorch the brow.
O mystic wings of Art, about thee Truth
Makes atmosphere of purity and power;
'Tis man's breath kills the spring's soft-petaled flower
Ye give a refuge for the heart of youth.
Ye give a value for all loss in age,
When feebled eyes search for forgotten springs;
Ye fan the breeze that turns the moulded page,
And carry back the soul to ardent things.
Poor payment can I give, but here engage
I thee to be Love's airy equipage.

Was it thy face I saw when, as a child,
Night after night I watched one quiet star
Shine 'tween my curtain and the window-bar
Until I slept, that made my sleep more mild?
Was it thy influence outreaching then
To me, o'er untrod years, o'er varying days,
To give me courage, as from phase to phase
Of youth's desires I passed to deeds of men?
Was it because the star was hid awhile,
That I in blindness wandered from my path;
That I wooed Folly with her mumming smile,
And sought for Lethe in a cup of wrath?
Another hand touched mine with sadness there,
And saved me till I saw thy face appear.

A WOMAN'S hand. Lo, I am thankful now
That with its touch I have walked all my days;
Rising from fateful and forbidden ways,
To find a woman's hand upon my brow;
Soft as a pad of rose-leaves, and as pure
As upraised palms of angels, seen in dreams:
And soothed by it, to stand as it beseems
A man who strives to conquer and endure.
A woman's hand!—there is no better thing
Of all things human; it is half divine;
It hath been more to this lame life of mine,
When faith was weakness, and despair was king.
Man more than all men, Thou wast glad to bless
A woman's sacrifice and tenderness.

One face I see by thine whene'er I hold
Converse with things that are or things that were;
Whene'er I seek life's hidden folds to stir,
And watch the inner to the outer rolled.
Dost thou not know *her*, O beloved one?
Hast thou not felt her sunshine on thy face?
In me hast thou not learned some signs to trace
Of that dear soul who calleth me her son?
Such as I was that in thy countenance
Found favour, from her it was gathered most.
To my mad youth her gentle surveillance
Was like a watch-fire on a rock-bound coast.
She drew about me motherhood, and thou
Hast with Love's holy chrism touched my brow.

She gave me courage when I weakly said,
"O see how drifting, derelict, am I!
The tide runs counter, and the wind is high;
I see no channel through the rocks ahead.
My arm is impotent; what worth to trim
The bending sails! Look, I shall quaff a cup
To Fate, while the wild ocean swallows up
The shipwrecked youth, the man who lives in him."
She said: "But thou hast valour, dear, too much
For such as this; thou hast grave embassy,
Given with thy birth; would'st thou thine honour smutch
With coward failing? Dear son, breast the sea."
Firm-purposed from that hour, through wind and wave,
I brought my message till thou shelter gave.

When first I saw thee, lady, straightway came
The thought that somehow, somewhere, destiny,
Through blinding paths of happiness or blame,
Would bend my way of life, my soul to thee.
But then I put it from me: was not I
A wanderer? To-morrow I should be
In other lands — beside another sea; —
Nay, you were but a star-gleam in my sky.
And so I came not in your sight awhile,
You gave no thought, and I passed not away;
But like some traveller in a deep defile
I walked in darkness even through the day:
Until at last the hands of Circumstance
Pointed the hour that waked me from my trance.

I did not will this thing. I set my face
Towards duty and my art; I was alone.
How knew I thou shouldst roll away the stone
From hopes long buried, by thy tender grace?
What does it matter that we make resolve?
The Fates laugh at us as they sit and spin;
We cannot tell what Good is, or what Sin,
Or why old faiths in mists of pain dissolve.
We only can stand watchful in the way,
Waiting with patient hands on shield and sword,
Ready to meet disaster in the fray,
Till Time has struck the letters of one word —
Word of such high-born worth: triumphant Love,
Give me thy canopy where'er I rove.

Was ever song well wrought through throbbing chords
Of music-voices falling on the air
In ecstasy of tenderness, but where
The spirit found its thought too deep for words?
Nay, it was fashioned when the proud soul strove,
And found on either hand a dread abyss
Of darkness palpable.—Who knows not this
Hath never sung or trod the plains of Love.
O artist soul, that worketh wonders well,
For human eyes and human hearts to know,
Who hears, far-off, the lyre of Israfel,
If you were ever where the sun-waves go,
What languor long had fallen on your soul,
How feebly glad would you have sought your goal!

SEEK thou the Angel of the Cross Roads ere thou goest upon a journey, and she will give thee wisdom at the Four Corners.

Egyptian proverb.

As one who waiteth for the signet ring
Of his dear sovereign, that his embassy
May have clear passport over land and sea,
And make the subject sacred as his king;
As waits the warrior for a pontiff's palm,
Upraised in blessing o'er his high emprise;
And bows his mailèd forehead prayerful-wise,
Sinking his turbulency in deep calm:
So waited I for one seal to be set
Upon my full commission, for a sign
That should make impotent man's "I forget,"
And make God's "I remember" more divine:
Which should command at need the homage of
The armèd squadrons of all loyal love.

But yestermorn my marshalled hopes were held
Upon the verge of august pilgrimage;
To-day I am as birds that leave the cage
To seek green embrasures they knew of eld;
To-day I am as one who hides his face
Within his golden beaver, and whose hand
Clenches with pride his tried and conquering brand,
Ay, as a hunter mounted for the chase.
For, see: upon my lips I carry now
A touch that speaks reveille to my soul;
I have a dispensation large enow
To enfold the world and circumscribe each pole.
Slow let me speak it: From her lips and brow
I took the gifts she only could endow.

O GIFTS divine as any ever knew
The noble spirits of an antique time;
As any poets fashion in their rhyme,
Or angels whisper down the shadeless blue!
The priceless gifts of holy confidence,
That speak through quivering lips from heart to heart;
That unto life new energies impart,
And open up the gates of prescience.
O dear my love, I unto thee have given
Pledge that I am thy vassal evermore;
I stand within the zenith of my Heaven,
On either hand a starred eternal shore.
I have come nearer to thy greater worth,
For thou hast raised me from the common earth.

I CAN say now, "There was the confluence
Of all Love's tributaries; there the sea
Of Love spread out towards eternity;
And there my coarser touched her finer sense.
Poor though I am in my own sight, I know
That thou hast winnowed, dear, what best I am;
Upon my restlessness thy ample calm
Hath fallen as on frost-bound earth the snow.
It hideth the harsh furrows that the wheels
Of heavy trials made in Life's champaign;
Upon its pure unfolding sunshine steals,
And there is promise of the spring again.
Here make I proclamation of my faith,
And poise my fealty o'er the head of Death.

If Death should come to me to-night, and say:
"I weigh thy destiny; behold, I give
One little day with this thy love to live,
Then, my embrace; or, leave her for alway,
And thou shalt walk a full array of years;
Upon thee shall the world's large honours fall,
And praises clamorous shall make for all
Thy strivings rich amends." If in my ears
Thou saidst, "I love thee!" I would straightway cry,
"A thousand years upon this barren earth
Is death without her: for that day I die,
And count my life for it of poorest worth."
Love's reckoning is too noble to be told
By Time's slow fingers on its sands of gold.

As in a foreign land one threads his way
'Mid alien scenes, knowing no face he meets;
And, hearing his name spoken, turns and greets
With wondering joy a friend of other days;
As in the pause that comes between the sound
And recognition, all the finer sense
Is swathed in a melodious eloquence,
Which makes his name seem in its sweetness drowned.
So stood I, by an atmosphere beguiled
Of glad surprise, when first thy lips let fall
The name I lightly carried when a child,
That I shall rise to at the judgment call.
The music of thy nature folded round
Its barrenness a majesty of sound.

Since I rose out of child-oblivion
I have walked in a world of many dreams,
And noble souls beside the shining streams
Of fancy have with beckonings led me on.
Their faces oft, mayhap, I could not see,
Only their waving hands and noble forms.
Sometimes there sprang between quick-gathered storms,
But always they came back again to me.
Women with smiling eyes and star-spun hair
Spake gentle things, bade me look back to view
The deeds of the great souls who climbed the stair
Immortal, and for whom God's manna grew:
Dante, Anacreon, Euripides,
And all who set rich wine upon the lees.

Men of brave stature came and placed their hands
Upon my head, and, lifting shining swords,
Drew through the air signs mightier than words,
And vanished in the sun upon the sands.
Glimpses I caught of faces that have come
Through crowding ages; whisperings of songs;
And prayers for the redress of human wrongs
From voices that upon the earth are dumb.
They were but shadows, but they lent me joy;
They gave me reverence for all who pace
The world with hands raised, evil to destroy,
Who live but for the honour of their race.
They taught me to strike at no idol raised,
Worshipped a space, then left to be dispraised.

STEDFASTNESS, shall we find it, then, at all?
Is it that as the winds blow north and south,
So must be praises from the loud world's mouth,
Which on its heroes in their glory fall?
Because the voice grows stiller, or the arm
No longer can beat evils back; because
The shoulders sink beneath new-rising cause,
And the fine thought has lost its moving charm;
Because of these shall puny sages shake
Their heads, and haste to mock the failing one,
Who in his strength could make the nations quake;
Prophet like Daniel, King like Solomon!
In this full time we have seen mockers run
About the throne of such as Tennyson.

Who saith thy hand is weak, King Tennyson?
Who crieth, See, the monarch is grown old,
His sceptre falls? Oh, carpers rude and bold,
You who have fed upon the gracious benison
Scattered unstinted by him, do you now
Dispraise the sweet-strung harp, grown tremulous
'Neath fingers overworn for all of us?
You cannot tear the laurels from his brow.
He lives above your idle vaunts and fears,
Enthronèd where all master souls stand up
In their high place, and fill the golden cup,
God-blest for kings, with wine of endless years,
And greet him one with them. O brotherhood
Of envious dullards, ye are wroth with good.

Why, let them rail! God's full anointed ones
Have heard the world exclaim, "We know you not!"
They who by their souls' travailing have brought
Us nearer to the wonder of the suns.
Yet, who can stay the passage of the stars?
Who can prevail against the thunder-sound?
The wire that flashes lightning to the ground
Diverts, but not its potency debars.
So, men may strike quick stabs at Cæsar's worth,—
They only make his life an endless force,
'Scaped from its penthouse, flashing through the earth,
And 'whelming those who railed about his corse.
Men's moods disturb not those born truly great:
They know their end; they can afford to wait.

And so it passed. I lived from year to year
With shadows, the strong warders of desire;
I learned through them to seek the golden fire
That hides itself in Song's bright hemisphere.
Through them I grew full of imaginings,
I made strange pictures, conjured images
From my deep longings; wrote the passages
Of life inwrought with half-glad wonderings.
For who can know a majesty of peace,
That wanders, ever waiting for a voice
To say to him, "Behold, at last surcease
Of thy unrest has come, therefore, rejoice"?
Here set I down some dreams that come again,
Almost forgotten in my higher gain.

A SHIP at sea; a port to anchor in;
Not far a starry light upon the shore.
The sheeted lightning, like a golden door,
Swings to and fro to let earth-angels in.
Most bravely has she sailed o'er every sea,
Withstood the storm-rack, spurned the sullen reef;
Cherished her strength; and held her guerdon fief
To him who saith, "My ship comes back to me!
Behold, I sent her forth a stately thing,
To be my messenger to farthest lands,
To Fortunate Isles, and where the silver sands
Girdle a summer sea; that she might bring
My bride, who wist not that I loved her so—
This is no bitter day for me, I trow!"

A SHIP in port; well-crossed the harbour-bar;
The hawser swung, the grinding helm at rest;
Hands clasping hands, and eyes with eager zest
Seeking the loved, returning from afar.
And he, the master, holding little reck
Of all, save but the idol of his soul,
Seeks not his loving ardour to control.
Mark how he proudly treads the whitened deck!
"My bride, my bride, my lone soul's best beloved,
Come forth, come forth! Where art thou, Isobel?—
Pallid and wan! Lord, hath it thus befel?
This is but dust; where has the spirit roved?
O death-cold bride! for this, then, have I strove?
O phantom ship, O loveless wraith of Love!"

A DAY of sunshine in a land of snow,
And a soft-curtained room, where ruddy flakes
Of flame fall free, in liquid light that slakes
The soft desire of one cold, pale face: lo,
Close-pressed sweet lips, and eyes of violet,
That are filled up as with a sudden fear —
A storm's prelude upon the expectant mere.
Yet deep behind what never they forget,
Who ever see in life's chance or mischance.
And he who saw, what could he do but say,
"Fold up the tents; the camp is struck; away!
Vain victor who rides not in rest his lance!"
Beside the hearthstone where the flame-flakes fell,
There lay the cold keys of the citadel.

A NIGHT wind-swept and bound about with blee
Of Erebus; all light and cheer within;
While restless hands that falter, then begin
To weave a music-voicèd fantasy.
And life, and death, and love, and weariness,
And unrequital, thrid the maze of sound;
And one voice saith, "Behold, the lost is found!"
And saith not any more for joyfulness.
Out of the night there comes a wanderer,
Who waits upon the threshold, and is still;
And listens, and bows down his head, until
His grief-drawn breath startles the heart of her.
The victor vanquished, at her feet he fell,
A prisoner in his conquered citadel.

Two of one name; they standing where the sun
Makes shadows in the orchard-bloom of spring;
She holding in her palm a jewelled ring,
He speaking on what evil it had done.
"Raise thy pale face and wondrous eyes to mine;
Let not thy poor lips quiver in such pain;
Too young and blindly thou hast drunk the wine
Crushed from the lees of love. Be strong again.
Trail back thy golden hair from thy broad brow,
And raise thy lily neck like some tall tower,
That recks not any strife nor any hour,
So it but holds its height, heeding not how.
The noblest find their way o'er paths of ire
To the clear summit of God's full desire."

THERE, I am weak; and this thy woman's grief
Hath wrung a tear from me. So, let it pass:
Thou hast reaped soon, now gather up the sheaf.
Thy little field is bare? Here is soft grass
That grows beneath the sun's red flags unfurled;
And there thy feet may tread, nor find it hard;
Requited too, in after days some bard,
In clear-toned songs from his great wonder-world,
Will sing to thee; and thou shalt understand
That sweetest songs are always shadow-cast:
That barren fields bloom into flower-land
For those who hold no quarrel with the past.
Raise, then, thy head; there is, dear, no device
To life's completeness, save by sacrifice.

I THINK in that far time when Gabriel came
And gave short speech to Mary sweet and wise,
That when the faint fear faded from her eyes,
And they were filled up with a sudden flame
Of joy bewildering and wonderment;
With reverence the angel in her palm
Laid one white lily, dewy with the balm
Of the Lord's garden; saying: "This is sent
For thine espousal, thou the undefiled;
And it shall bloom till all be consummate."
Lo, then he passed. She, musing where she sate,
Felt all her being moved in manner wondrous mild;
Then, laying 'gainst her bosom the white flower,
She bowed her head, and said, "It is God's dower."

DREAMS, only dreams. They sprang from loneliness
Of outer life; from innermost desire
To reach the soul that now in golden fire
Of cherished song I pray for and caress.
I wandered through the world with longing gaze,
To find her who was my hope's parallel,
That to her I might all my gospel tell
Of changeless love, and bid her make appraise.
I knew that some day I should look within
The ever-deepening distance of her eyes;
For, in my dreams, from veilèd Seraphim
Came one, as if in answer to my cries:
And passing near me, pointed down the road
That led me at the last to thy abode.

It was thy form I saw, beloved one,
Dim to mine eyes, but speaking to my soul;
And though sometimes I said, "There is no goal
To life or love, and hidden is the sun";
Sweet presages of bliss ran in between
The lines I drew of duty and of law;
And in my art o'er-coloured every flaw,
To make what was seem as what should have been.
And when, at last, most like a child that wakes
From the warm gloom of sleep, and feels the light
Of the sun's zenith on its eyes, and makes
Bewildered gestures, I came in thy sight
Through mists of joy. With trembling hands I hailed
Thee as my liege, my seraph-queen unveiled.

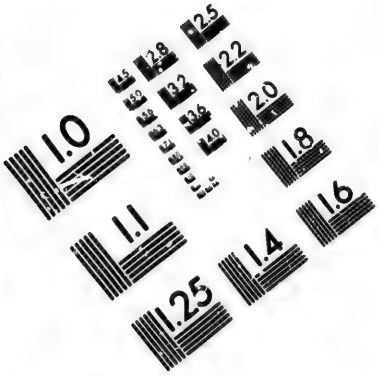
Into thy land of sunlight I have come,
And live within thy presence, as a ray
Of light lives in the brightness of the day;
And find in thee my heaven and my home.
Yet what am I that thou shouldst ope the gate
Of thy most sweet completeness; and should spend
Rich values of thy life on me thy friend,
For which I have no worthy duplicate!
Nay, lady, I no riches have to give;
I have no name of honour, or the pride
Of place, to priv'lege me to sit beside
Thee in thy kingdom, where thy graces live.
Wilt thou not one day whisper, "You have climbed
Beyond your merits; pray you, fall behind."

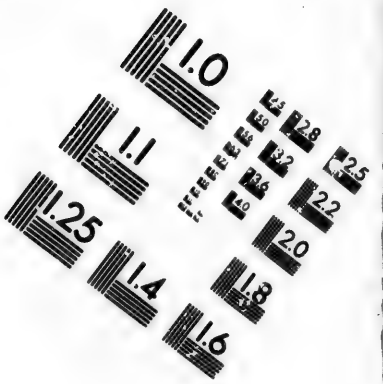
If thou shouldst do so, when thou hast o'er-scanned
The many blurrèd pages of the tome
Wherein is drawn, from corner-stone to dome,
My life's poor structure; I would take thy hand,
And say with words wherein no anger dwelt,—
"Against thy mandate I can make no plea;
Thou art too queenly far to sort with me;
Before thy throne I always should have knelt.
That thou upraised me, it was gentleness;
That thou much honoured, it was pity most;
That thou didst listen to my songs, was cost
Of thy sweet patience; and that thou didst bless
Me with rich converse, 'twas that thou wast fain
To help the blinded to the light again."

"THEY 'RE parted, then—what cause?"
"A cause of blood, my lord, a father's feud."
"When was the thing disclosed?"
"But yesterday."
"Mad yesterday! And is all ended then?"
"Ended, my lord!—The flame burns brighter still."

The Earl's Daughter.

Divided by no act of thine or mine,
Forever parted by a fatal deed,
A fatal feud. Alas! when fathers bleed,
The children shall fulfil the wild design.
A Montague hath killed a Capulet,
A Capulet hath slain a Montague,—
Twin graves, twin sorrows, and oh, mad to-do
Of vengeance! oh, dread entail of regret!
There lie they in their dark, self-chosen graves,
And from them cries Hate's everlasting ghost,—
"Blood hath been shed, and Love and ye are slaves,
Time wrecks, and freedom drifts upon life's coast."
Yet not for us the relish of that doom
Which found a throne upon a Juliet's tomb.





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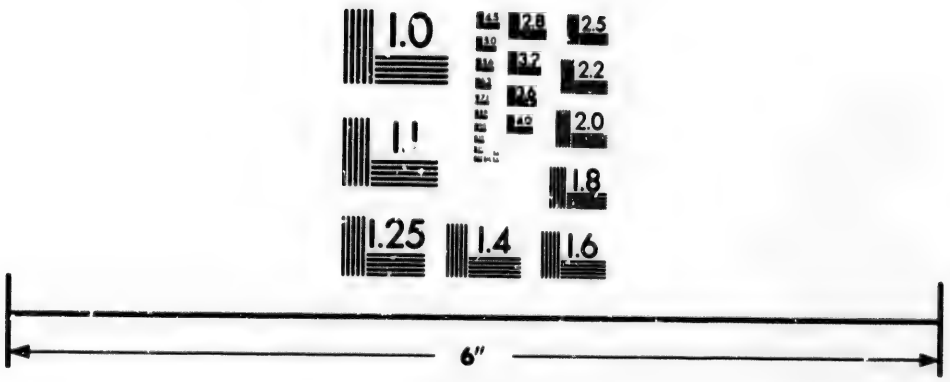

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We must live on; a deeper tragedy:
To see, to touch, to know, and to desire;
To feel in every vein the glorious fire
Of Eden, and to cry, "Oh, to be free!"
To cry, "Oh, wipe the gloomy stain away,
Thou who first raised the sword, who gave the hilt
Into the hand of man. This blood they spilt—
Our fathers—oh, blot out the bitter day!
Erase the hour from out Thy calendar,
Turn back the hands upon the clock of Time,
Oh, Artificer of destroying War!—
Their righteous hate who bore us in our crime."
"*Upon the children!*"—'Tis the cold reply
Of Him who makes to those who must not die.

Yet life is sweet. Thy soul hath breathed along,
Thine eyes have cast their glory on the earth,
Thy foot hath touched it, and thine hour of birth
Didst give a new pulse to the veins of song.
Better to stand amid the toppling towers
Of every valiant hope; a Samson's dream,
Than the deep indolence of Lethe's stream,
The loneliness of slow submerging hours.
Better, oh, better thus to see the wreck,
And to have rocked to motion of the spheres;
Better, oh, better, to have trod the deck
Of hope, and sailed the unmanageable years—
Ay, better to have paid the price, and known,
Than never felt this tyrannous Alone!

"THAT was the lesser cause."
"Later it 'fel?"
"Later. Their love sailed on despite the feud;
And then this other — why, so small a thing!"
"Poor fools!"

The Earl's Daughter.

Upon the disc of Love's bright planet fell
A darkness yester-eve, and from your lips
I heard cold words; then came a swift eclipse
Of joy at meeting on hope's it-is-well.
And if I spoke with sadness and with fear;
If from your gentle coldness I drew back,
And felt that I had lost the flowery track
That led to peace in Love's sweet atmosphere:
It was because a woful dread possessed
My aching heart — the dread some evil star
Had crossed the warm affection in your breast,
Had bade me stand apart from where you are.
The world seemed breaking on my life; I heard
The crash of sorrows in that chiding word.

It is not so, when most I need your love,
When, rising from the thousand odds, I lean
My life out towards your faith, there comes between
A raven where there sailed a skyey dove!
And is it so, that when I said, "I go
To meet her who has filled my vacant days
With sunshine, who has glorified my ways
With sweetness"—and my heart is all aglow;
She bends upon me an upbraiding brow,
She speaks that word—that word! It fills my soul
With unimagined sadness. Ah, not now
Without her can I travel to my goal.
Grey evening came where morning then did shine—
Take back the word and bless me, lady mine.

THINK you, I am so weak, so poor a thing,
That ere Love's dawn had grown into its morn,
I could grow cold? — Were I so worthy scorn
My sorrow I could not before you bring.
For I am grieved, yes, grieved beyond all speech,
That this one woman whom I worship should
Thus rob me of that first and latent good,
That in my nature has an upward reach.
For I am stedfast in my love: I laid
My life in homage at her feet; I said,
I will be true until the sun shall fail
From out my life, and men say, He is dead.
And this, this comes! The wheels jolt heavily
Along life's road. For she spoke thus to me!

How sweet, how high your noble letter read!
Forgive you? 'Twere an easy thing to do
By lofty souls, but not from me to you;
I only can heap blessings on your head.
O lady, I have nothing to forgive;
You hurt me: I am sorry: if I did
Give you unwilling pain, let it be hid
In *your* most sweet forgiveness, and believe—
Believe that though I sadden at the show
Of your reproaches, I am still the same
That made thee, dear, his heaven here below,
And frames his only prayers about your name.
Open your heart to me, and I will come,
And say again, O dearest, this is home!

Couldst thou not read beyond the written word?
Not count the heart-throbs on each syllable?
Not know that staring silences may fill
With language that would falter, being heard?
For when the soul is waiting in a flame
Of pity; when the heart is compassèd
By tenderness; all usual speech is fled,
And then that language comes that hath no name.
Speech with its formal habit, lady, seems
Like some white statue, while within the stone,
As chanced of old, a radiant beacon beams,
Which but the priestess sees; and she alone.
Couldst thou, beside thine altar, then, not see
Behind the "exceeding coldness," warmth for thee?

It is not so, and so for evermore,
That thou and I must live our lives apart;
I with a patient smother at my heart,
And thy hand resting on a closèd door?
What couldst thou ever ask me that I should
Not bend my nature to thy high behest?
What cannot men achieve with lance in rest
Who carry noble valour in their blood?
And some nobility of high emprise,
Lady, couldst thou make possible in me;
If living 'neath the pureness of thy eyes,
I found the key to inner majesty;
And reaching outward, heart-strong, from thy hand,
Set here and there a beacon in the land.

Nor by my power alone, but thou and I
Together thinking, working, loving on
Achievement-wards, as all brave souls have gone,
Perchance should find new star-drifts in the sky
That curves above humanity, and set
Some new interpretation on life's page;
Should serve the strivings of a widening age,
And fashion wisdom from the social fret.
Deep did Time's lances go; thou plucked them forth,
And on my sullen woundings laid the balm
Of thy life's sweetness. Oh, let my love be worth
The keeping. My head beneath thy palm,
Once more I lift Love's chalice to thine eyes:
Not till thou blessest me will I arise.

O NEVER could I go to a last word,
And offer, with a formal honesty,
A God-be-with-you, and to know that she,
As though a whole life's speech she had not heard,
Could put this vivid Present from her path,
Could say, "I pity him, for he was kind,
He had some gifts of heart, was clear of mind,
But Time hath sorely rusted what he hath;
So, that's done!" Ever my soul declares
Against such verdict; rises and makes count
Of those swift steps that make the golden stairs
Unto her friending, and unto the fount
Of that deep beauty, which doth make as jest
That sad Athenian Paris and his quest.

And, making count, at every step I see
Something in her, like to a hidden thought
Within my life, that long time I had sought,
But never found till her soul spoke to me.
And if she said a thousand times, "I did
Not call thee, thou cam'st seeking; not my voice
Was it thou heard'st; thy love was not my choice!"
I should straightway reply, "That of thee hid,
Even from thyself, lest it should startle thee,
Hath called me, made me slave and king in one;
And when the mists of Time shall rise, and we
Stand forth, it shall be said, Since Time begun
Ye two were called as one from that high hill,
Where the creating Master hath His will."

WISH thy friend joy of his journey, but pray in secret that he have no joy, for then may he return quickly to thee.

Egyptian proverb.

I HAVE beheld a multitude stand still
In such deep silence that a sudden pain
Struck through the heart in sharing the tense strain,
And all the world seemed bounded by one will.
But when precipitated on the sea
Of human feeling was the incident
That caught their wonder; then the skies were rent
With quivering sound, with passion's liberty.
So have I stood before this parting day,
With chilly fingers pressed upon my breast,
That my heart burst not fleshen bands away,
And my sharp cry break through my lady's rest.
I have shut burning eyelids on the sight
Of this dread time that seems creation's night.

Have I then found thee but to lose thee, friend?
But touched thee ere thou vanished from my gaze?
And when my soul is struggling from the maze
Of many conflicts, must our converse end?
Across the empty space that now shall spread
Between us, shall I never go to thee?
Or thou, belovèd, never come to me,
Save but to whisper prayers above the dead?
No, cruel thought! Shall not Hope's convoy bear
To thee the reinforcements of my love?
Shall I not on thy white hand drop a tear
Of crownèd joy, one day, where thou dost move
In thy place regally; even as now
I place my farewell token on thy brow?

And now when from the shore goes out the ship
Wherein is set the treasure that I hold
Closer than miser all his hidden gold,
Dearer than wine Zeus carried to his lip;
My aching heart cries from its pent-up pain,—
"O Love, O Life, O more than life to me,
How can I live without the surety
Of thy sweet presence till we meet again!"
So like a wounded deer I came to thee,
The arrow of mischance piercing my side;
And through thy sorrow-healing ministry
I rose with strength, like giants in their pride.
But now — but now — how shall I stand alone,
Knowing the light, the hope of me is gone?

The ship that bears thee from my sight bears too
My heart that follows whither thou may'st roam;
And all my thoughts go with thee o'er the foam,
I pray — ah, 'tis the old prayer — and the new.
My sighs go out in conflict with the wind
That fills the sails which carry thee afar;
My weak words make poor pageantry of war
Against the Fate that leaveth me behind.
Like the slow sound of minute guns at sea
I hear the echoes which strike in between
The God-be-with-yous that I say to thee
And all that to me, lady, thou hast been.
And so our ways diverge like deltaed Nile,
To meet — who knoweth? — in the afterwhile.

LADY, alas! that when I need thee most,
That when upon the verge of this new day,
Thou shouldst pass from me: lo, my skies are gray,
And north winds blow along Life's stormy coast.
I know that I shall feel thee everywhere,
That, fronting duty, I shall see thy face;
That thou shalt minister by thy sweet grace
To daily uses and to lighten care.
But when the task grows heavy, when a pause
Comes in the lonely striving, then in vain
I shall arise, and turning towards the cause
Of high intention, seek repose again.
I shall stretch eager hands which may not touch
The fingers that have thrilled my life so much.

O BROW, so fronted with a stately calm,
O full completeness of true womanhood,
O counsel, pleader for all highest good,
Thou hast upon my sorrow poured thy balm!
Poor soldier he who did not raise his sword,
And, touching with his lips the hilt-cross, swear
In war or peace the livery to wear
Of one that blessed him with her queenly word.
Most base crusader, who at night and morn
Crying *Dahin*, thought not of her again
From whose sweet power was his knighthood born,
For whom he quells the valiant Saracen.
Shall I not, then, in the tumultuous place
Of my life's warfare ever seek thy face?

HERE count I over all the gentle deeds
That thou hast done; here summon I thy words,
Sweeter to me than sweetest song of birds;
That came like grace immortal to my needs.
Love's usury has reckoned such a sum
Of my indebtedness, that I can make
No lien large enough to overtake
Its value — and before it I am dumb!
Yet, O my gracious, most kind creditor,
I would not owe to thee one item less:
We cannot give the sun requital for
Its liberal light; our office is to bless.
If blessings could be compassed by my prayer,
High Heaven should set jewels in thy hair.

Last night I saw the warm December moon
Sail upward through a smoky amber sea;
Orion stood in silver majesty
Where the gold-girdled sun takes rest at noon.
I slept; I dreamed. Against a sunset sky
I saw thee stand all garmented in white;
With hand stretched to me, and there in thy sight
I went to meet thee; but I heard thee cry:
"We stand apart as sun from shining sun;
Thou hast thy place; there rolleth far and near
A sea between; until life's all be done
Thou canst not come, nor I go to thee, dear."
Methought I bowed my head to thy decree,
And donned the mantle of my misery.

'Tis morning now, and dreams and fears are gone,
And sleep has calmed the fever in my veins,
And I am strong to drink the cup that drains
The last drop through my lips, and make no moan.
Strength I have borrowed from the outward show
Of spiritual puissance thou dost wear.
Shall I not thy high domination share
Over the shock of feeling? Shall I grow
More fearful than the soldier, when between
The smoke of hostile cannon lies his way;
To carry far the colours of his queen,
While her bright eyes behold him in the fray?
Here do I smile between the warring hosts
Of sad farewells; and reck not what it costs.

And O most noble, and yet once again
Most noble spirit, if I ever did
Aught that thy goodness frowns on, be it hid
Forever, and deep-buried. Let the rain
Of coming springs fall on the quiet grave.
Perchance some violets will grow to tell
That I, when uttering this last farewell,
Built up a sacrificial architrave;
That I, who worship thee, have love so great,
To live in the horizon thou may'st set;
To stand but in the shadow of the gate,
Faithful, when coward promptings cry, "Forget."
Ah, lady, when I gave my heart to thee,
It passed into thy lifelong regency.

SHINE on, O sun! Sing on, O birds of song!
And in her light my heart fashions a tune
Not wholly sad, most like a tender rune
Sung by some knight in days gone overlong,
When he with minstrel eyes in Syrian grove
Looked out towards his England, and then drew
From a sweet instrument a sound that grew
From twilight unto morning of his love.
Go, then, beloved; bearing as you go
These songs that have more sunlight far than cloud;
More summer flowers than dead leaves 'neath the snow;
That tell of hopes from which you raised the shroud.
My lady, bright benignant star, shine on!
I lift to thee my low Trisagion.

He that hath pleasant dreams is more fortunate than one who hath a cup-bearer.

Egyptian proverb.

So, thou art gone; and I am left to wear
Thy memory as a golden amulet
Upon my breast, to sing a chansonnette
Of winter-tones, when summer-time is here.
And yet, my heart arises from the dark,
Where it fell back in silence when you went
To sea-ward, and a sprite malevolent
Sat laughing in the white sails of thy barque.
'Twas not moth-wings dashing against the flame,
Burning in love's arcanum; 'twas a cry
Struck from soul-crossing chords, that, separate, frame
Life's holy calm, or wasting agony.
But now between the warring strings there grows
A space of peace, as 'tween truce-honoured foes.

HERE one by one come back the thousand things
That made divinely sweet our intercourse;
Love summons them here straightway to divorce
The heart from melancholy wanderings.
"Here laid she her white hand upon my arm;
To this place came she with slow-gliding grace;
Here smiled she up serenely in my face;
And these sweet notes she sang me for a charm."
I treasure up her words, and say them o'er
With close-shut eyes; with her again I float
Upon the Loire; I see the gems she wore,
The ruby shining at her queenly throat;
I climb with her again the Pyrenees,
And hear her laughter ringing through the trees.

My calendar, by which I count me now
Time's pressure, showeth these bright days
Spent in thy sunshine; one of which outweighs
A thousand others. I have learned to know
That pulses may beat through a length of years,
And days and hours be as a troubled dream,
From which the waking makes the world to seem
New-born — but as the clippings of Time's shears.
I held no tenure on the earth until
My lady came, and made a covenant
Of days with me; until I saw her fill
Life's chalice, my most sweet hierophant.
And opening up my book of days I see
Written upon them Love's phylactery.

ONCE thou didst kneel beside me in a sweet
Warm rush of feeling, filling, rich and free,
The inmost soul, the tender thought of thee;
And made thee heavenly from head to feet.
It was thy goodness, lady, that outspread
To pen me in its passionless white fold;
To sweep about me graces manifold,
Who loves thee living and shall love thee dead.
Thou knelt beside me! Thou whom, here, I swear,
I held so high, that but to be within
Thy presence was to breathe so pure an air
That one forgot the world had learned to sin.
Thou kneeling, I caressed thee, but the touch
Was holy, for I reverenced thee so much.

I IN my childhood never saw the sea
Save in my dreams. There it was vast and lone,
Splendid in power, breaking against the stone
Walls of the world in thunder symphony.
From it arose mists growing into mists
Making a cool white curtain for the sun,
And melting mornward when the day was done,
A moving sphere where spirits kept their trysts.
A ceaseless swinging with the swinging earth,
A never-tiring ebbing to and fro,
Trenching eternal fastnesses; a girth
Round mountains in their everlasting snow.
It was a vast emotion, fibre-drawn
From all the elements since the first dawn.

And in those visions that seemed far too great
For heart of childhood to be spent among,
There was an aching fearlessness which wrung
From ignorance a consciousness elate.
Proud was that soul that knew the ardent hour,
To feel the wrack of all the winds that blew,
To pierce and range the wide emotion through,
With the straight lance of instinct and of power.
What is the universe or aught within,
That is so greater than the majesty
Of man, in God's own image? what the din
Of wasting waves, or any wraiths that be?
Man's soul, I said, strikes clearly through the sweep
Of world-wide passions to eternal sleep.

Then came in further years the virgin sight
Of the live sea; the sea that marches down,
With sunny phalanxes and flags of foam,
To match its puissance with earth's awful might.
Far off the purple mist drew into mist,
As thought melts into endless thought, and round
The rim of the sheer world was heard a sound,
Floating through palpitating amethyst.
And through the varying waste of elements
There passed a sail, which caught the opposing wind,
Triumphant, as an army in its tents
Beholds the foe it, conquering, left behind.
"And Life," I said,—"Life is but like the sea;
And what shall guide us to our destiny?"

The prescience of dreams struck walls away
From mortal fact, and mortal fact revealed,
With myriad voices, potencies concealed
In the dim birthplace of a coming day.
Even as a blind man's fingers wander o'er
His harpstrings, led by sound to dreams of sound,
Till in his soul an eloquence profound
Rises above the petulance and roar
Of the great globe: as in a rush of song
From feathered throats, one, in a mighty wood,
'Mid sweet interpositions moves along
The avenues of some predestined good;
So I, dream-nurtured, standing by the sea,
Made levy on the wonders that should be.

And God is good, I said, and Art is good,
And labour hath its rich reward of sleep;
And recompense will come for all who keep
Dishonour's ill contagion from the blood.
And over us there curves the infinite
Blue heaven as a shield, and at the end
We shall find One who loveth to befriend
E'en those who faint for shame within His sight.
And down the awful passes of the sky
There comes the voice that circumvents the gale;
That makes the avalanche to pass us by,
And saith, "I overcome" to man's "I fail."
"And peradventure now," said I, "the zest
Of all existence waits on His behest."

But man's deliverances intervene
Between the soul's swift speech and God's high will;
That saith to tempests of the thought, "Be still!"
And in life's lazaretto maketh clean
The leprous sense. Ah, who can find his way
Among the many altars? Who can call
Out perfect peace from any ritual,
Or shelter find in systems of a day?
As one sees on some ancient urn, upthrown
From out a tomb, records that none may read
With like interpretation, and the stone
Retains its graven fealty to the dead:
So, on the great Palimpsest men have writ
Such lines o'ercrossed that none interprets it.

What marvel that the soul of youth should cry,
"Man builds his temples 'tween me and the face
Of Him whom I would seek; I cannot trace
His purpose in their shadow, nor descry
The wisdom absolute?" What marvel that,
With yearning impotent, ay, impotent
Beyond all measure! his full faith was spent,
And for his soul there rose no Ararat?
Yet out upon the sun-drawn sensate sea
Of elemental pain, there came a word
As if from Him who travelled Galilee,
As fair as any Zion ever heard.
The voice of Love spoke; Love, that writes its name
On Life and Death — and then my lady came.

As light leaps up from star to star, so mounts
Faith from one soul unto another; so
The lower to the higher; till the flow
Of knowledge rises from creation's founts;
Until from human love we come to know
The august presence of the Love divine;
And feel the light unutterable shine
Upon half-lights that we were wont to show,
Absorbing them. 'Tis Love that beckons us
From low desires, from restlessness and sin,
To heights that else we had not reached; and thus
We find the Heaven we dared not hope to win.
How clearer seem designs immortal when
Our lives are fed on Love's fine regimen.

"It is no matter;"—thus the noble Dane,
About his heart more ill than one could tell;
Sad augury, that like a funeral bell
Against his soul struck solemn notes of pain.
So 'gainst the deadly smother he could press
With calm his lofty manhood; interpose
Purpose divine, and at the last disclose
For life's great shift a regnant readiness.
To-day I bought some matches in the street
From one whose eyes had long since lost their sight.
Trembling with palsy was he to his feet.
"Father," I said, "how fare you in the night?"
"In body ill, but 'tis no matter, friend,
Strong is my soul to keep me to the end."

It dies, the old year dies; and down the steep
Cold spaces of the sky there comes a word
That bids the new year rise; as one has heard
A voice call to him from the isles of sleep;
And through the sweet creating note I trace
A silver thread of melody. 'Tis thou
Calling to me; thy voice is ringing now
Through all the night; thy breath is on my face.
I raise my head; the air is full of song;
'Tis thou that fills my world; that makes me glad;
I leave the old year neither weak nor sad,
For I am blessed, ay, blessed my whole life long.
I have, where'er I go, whate'er I be,
A present joy, a gracious memory.

DISTRUST not a woman nor a king—it availeth nothing.

Egyptian proverb.

WHEN thou journeyest into the shadows, take not sweetmeats with thee, but a seed of corn and a bottle of tears and wine; that thou may'st have a garden in the land whither thou goest.

Egyptian proverb.

Once more! once more! That golden even-tide!
Golden within, without all cold and grey,
Slowly you came forth from the troubled day,—
Singing my heart—you glided to my side;
You glided in; the same grave, quiet face,
The same deep look, the never-ending light
In your proud eyes, eyes shining through the night,
That night of absence—distance—from your place.
Calm words, slow touch of hand, but, oh, the cry,
The long, long cry of passion and of joy
Within my heart; the star-burst in the sky—
The world—our world—that time may not destroy!
Your world and mine, unutterably sweet:
Dearest, once more, the old song at thy feet.

Dearest, once more! This I could tell and tell
Till life turned drowsy with the ceaseless note;
Dearest, once more! The words throb in my throat,
My heart beats to them like a muffled bell.
Change—Time and Change! O Change and Time, you come
Not knocking at my door, knowing me gone;
Here have I dwelt within my heart alone,
Watching and waiting, while my muse was dumb.
Song was gone from me—dear, I could not sing,
Save as men sing upon the lonely hills;
Under my hand the old chord ceased to ring,
Hushed by the grinding of the high gods' mills.
Dearest, once more. Those mad mills had their way—
Now is mine hour. To every man his day.

How have I toiled! How have I set my face
Fair to the swords! No man could say I quailed;
Ne'er did I falter; I dare not to have failed,
I dare not to have dropped from out the race.
Good was the fight—good, till a piteous dream
Crept from some woful covert of despair;
Showed me your look, that look so true and fair,
Distant and bleak; for me no more to gleam.
Then was I driven back upon my soul;
Then came dark moments; lady, then I drew
Forth from its place the round unfathomed bowl
Of sorrow, and from it I quaffed to you;
Speaking as men speak who have lost
Their hearts' last prize—and dare not count the cost.

But you are here unchanged. You say not so
In words, but when you placed your hands in mine;
But when I saw the same old glory shine
Within your eyes, I read it; and I know.
And when those hands ran up along my arm,
And rested on my shoulder for a space,
A sacred inquisition in your face,
To read my heart,—how could I doubt that charm,
That truth ineffable!—I set my soul
In hazard to a farthing, that you kept
The faith, with pride unspeakable, the whole
Course of those years in which communion slept.
Your soul flamed in your look; you read; I knew
How little worth was I, how heavenly you.

I READ your truth. You read — What did you read?
Did you read *all*, and, reading all, forgive?
How I — O little dwarf of conscience sieve
My soul; bare all before her bare indeed!
And, looking on the remnant and the waste,
Can you absolve me? — I, the doubter, one
Who challenged what God spent His genius on,
His genius and His pride; so fair, so chaste!
I am ashamed. . . . And when I told my dreams,
Shaken and humble, — "Dear, there was no cause,"
Your words; proud, sorrowful, as it beseems
Such as thou art. There never was a cause
Why you should honor me. Ashamed am I.
And you forgive me, bless me, for reply!

You bless me, then you turn away your head—
"Never again, dear. I have blessed you so,
My lips upon your cheek; between must flow
The river—O the river!" Thus you said.
The river—O the river, and the sun;
Stream that we may not cross, sun that is joy:
Flow as thou must; shine on in full employ—
Shine through her eyes thou; the river run.
O lady, to your liegeman speak. . You say:
"Dream no more dreams; yourself be as am I."
Your hands clasped to your face, so shutting out the day
An instant, then to me, and then your low good-bye—
Good-night, good-bye; and then the social reign,
The lights, the songs, the flowers—and the pain.

"Oh, hush!" you said; "oh, hush!" The twilight hung
Between us and the world; but in your face,
Flooding with warm inner light, the sovereign grace
Of one who rests the brooding trees among —
Of one who steps down from a lofty throne,
Seeking that peace the sceptre cannot call;
And leaving courtier, page, and seneschal,
Goes down the lane of sycamores alone;
And, going, listens to the notes that swell
From golden throats — stories of ardent days,
And lovers in fair vales; and homing bell:
And the sweet theme unbearable, she prays
The song-bird cease! So, on the tale I dare,
Your "hush!" your wistful "hush!" broke like a prayer.

"NEVER," you said, "never this side the grave!
And what shall come hereafter, who may know?
Whether we e'en shall guess the way we go,
Passing beneath Death's mystic architrave—
Silence or song, dumb sleep or cheerful hours?"
O lady, you have questioned, answer too.
You—you to die! Silence and gloom for you:
Dead song, dead lights, dead graces, and dead flowers!
It is not so: the foolish trivial end,
The inconsequent paltry Nothing—gone—gone all!
The genius of that ageless Something spend
Itself within this little earthly wall;—
The commonplace conception: that we reap
Reward of drudge and ploughman—idle sleep!

You shall live on triumphant, you shall take
Your place among the peerless, fearless Ones;
And those who loved you here shall tell their sons
To honour every woman for your sake.
And those your Peers shall say, "Others are pure,
Others are noble, others too have vowed,
And for a vow have suffered; but she bowed
Her own soul and another's to endure.
She smote the being more to her than all,—
Her own soul and the world,—a truth to hold,
Faith with the dead; and hung a heavy pall
'Tween her and love and life. The world is old,
It hath sent here none queenlier. Of the few,
The royal few is she, martyred and true.

Upon the rack of this tough world I hear—
As when Cordelia's glories all dissever—
"Never—never—never—never—never!"
That wild moan of the dispossessèd Lear.
O world, vex not this ghost, O let it pass,
The Spirit of these songs. The fool hath mocked,
The fool our woe upon us hath unlocked
From where the soul holds to our lips the glass,
To see what breath of life. O fool, poor fool,
Well, we have laughed together, you and I.
O fond insulter, in the healing pool
Of your deep poignant raillery I lie.
Let us be grand again, my fool. The throne
Is gone; but see, the coronation stone!

Know you where I, my royal fool, was crowned?—
A rock within the great Egean? Where
A strong flood hurrieth on Finistére?
Where at the Pole our valiant men were drowned?
Where the soft creamy wash of Indian seas
Spreads palmward? Where the sunset glides to dawn,
No night between? Where all the tides are drawn
To greet their Sun and bathe their Idol's knees?
Where was I crowned? Dear fool, upon a stone
That standeth where Earth's arches make but one,
Where all the banners of *her* soul were flown,
And trumpeted the legions of the sun.
The stone is left: 'tis here against the door
Of throne and kingdom. . . . Pray you, mock no more.

A TIME will come when we again shall rail—
Not yet, not yet. The flood comes on apace,
That deep dividing river, and her face
Grows dimmer as it widers—pale, so pale.
Have we not railed and laughed these many days,
Mummers before the lights? Dear fool, your hand
Upon your lips—O let us once be grand,
Grand as we were when treading royal ways.
Lo, there she moves beyond the river. Gone—
Gone is the sun—lo, starlight in her eyes.
See, how she standeth silent and alone—
Oh, hush! let us not vex her with our cries.
Proud as of old, unto my throne I go. . . .
Cordelia's gone. . . . "Hush, draw the curtain—so."

ENVOY

When you and I have played the little hour,
Have seen the tall subaltern Life to Death
Yield up his sword; and, smiling, draw the breath,
The first long breath of freedom; when the flower
Of Recompense hath fluttered to our feet,
As to an actor's; and the curtain down,
We turn to face each other all alone—
Alone, we two, who never yet did meet,
Alone, and absolute, and free: oh, then,
Oh, then, most dear, how shall be told the tale?
Clasped hands, pressed lips, and so clasped hands again;
No words. But as the proud wind fills the sail,
My love to yours shall reach, then one deep moan
Of joy; and then our infinite Alone.

Here
endeth this
little book entitled
A Lover's Diary
which was written by
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